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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MASERU 000545

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FOR AF/S - DAN MOZENA AND INR - J. SWANN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [LY](#) [CH](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: ALLEGED LIBYAN INVOLVEMENT, PARLIMENTARIAN CHANGES: FOREIGN
MINISTER'S VIEWS

REF: (A) MASERU 538 (B) MASERU 514 (C) MASERU 269

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CLASSIFIED BY: June Carter Perry, Ambassador, EXEC , STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

Libyan Connections?

¶1. (S) In an expansive October 26 discussion with Ambassador (accompanied by PDEP Chris Smith, notetaker), Foreign Minister Moleleki again expounded on themes alluded to with Ambassador throughout the year, notably the role of Libya and "manipulation" of the GOL political system. Moleleki accused former Minister of Communication Tom Thabane of receiving funds from Libya and Taiwan to finance his operations, particularly in convincing 17 members of Parliament to join his new political party (ABC). This is one of several occasions in which Moleleki has become very emotive in expressing his disdain for Thabane. The reason, according to FOMIN, behind Thabane's actions is to "open the flood gates to Islam." As has been previously reported, the Libyan Envoy had told the U.S. Ambassador that he has been waiting three (3) years for a response from the GOL to his request that he open a large Islamic school and cultural center in Lesotho. Moleleki stated that the GOL was not going to give this permission and he reiterated his deep concerns about the terrorist activity carried out by Islamic groups around the world. On numerous occasions he has pointed out to us that Lesotho wants nothing to do with the potential presence of groups such as Al Qaida in this country.

"Buying" Opposition Support

¶2. (C) Moleleki went on to accuse Thabane of buying the "crossover" of Parliamentarians from other parties, including the ruling LCD, to join him. He alleged that Thabane has set up stands around Maseru to sign up supporters to whom he then gives money. He suggested that we have local staff walk up to one of these stands and observe what is happening. (Comment: Post has not done so thus far, but we will certainly keep our eyes open for any unusual activity by Thabane adherents in this regard. We also keep in mind the fact that the FOMIN has repeatedly accused Thabane of being the main force behind his attempted assassination in January 2006. Therefore, his statements about the former Minister of Communication are subject to careful

scrutiny. End Comment.)

Taiwan's Alleged Role

¶3. (C) Moleleki's accusations concerning cash handouts to Thabane by the Taiwanese was presented as an attempt to have Lesotho recognize Taiwan rather than the PRC as the legitimate representative of Lesotho. During the recent Chinese National Day, Moleleki spoke about Lesotho's recognition of the "one China policy." The October 26 allegation was the first we had heard that the Taiwanese Government may be involved in trying to "buy" representation in Lesotho.

Unorthodox Behavior and Various

¶4. (C) In addition to the above allegations, the Foreign Minister accused Thabane of surrounding himself with former military figures. Earlier this year, he indicated his belief that former military renegades were part of Thabane's plot to have him killed. Despite what is said to be about USD 500,000 in Thabane's bank account in South Africa to buy support, Moleleki asserted that the LCD continued to have support from smaller political parties and that there was, at this moment, no real threat to the party in power (the LCD). Among the ruling party individuals from whom Thabane is receiving support in the military, claimed Moleleki, is the Commissioner of Police. Furthermore, during this rather lengthy monologue, Moleleki said that former Minister Thabane is "surrounding himself with scum" and "is moving towards the edge of the law with regards to money laundering." We, in the midst of this monologue, did concur that it was important to fight terrorism at all levels and Lesotho's support on this issue was appreciated, as well as its ongoing effort to combat money laundering, which posed a threat not only to Lesotho, but worldwide. (We have, and continue, to expect to provide training and support in this area.) At the

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end of this discussion, Minister Moleleki added that Thabane was not the only "criminal" among the ranks of Lesotho's politicians, but that BNP opposition leader, General Lekhanyana had "killed" one member of his own party. While Moleleki did not articulate this, we assumed he was referring to the assassination earlier this year of Mr. Bereng Sekhonyana, a BNP member who was gunned down about a mile from the Embassy (Ref C).

¶5. (C) In addition to his tirade against Tom Thabane, Minister Moleleki did intersperse several items of interest including the fact that he will be going to China on or about November 1 for the China/Africa Summit and that he would continue visiting other places in China, open Lesotho's Mission in Tokyo, travel through Canada and possibly to the U.S. where one of his daughters, he hopes, will be able to visit an aunt resident in the midwest. The Minister was advised that there is a visa application procedure and consular officers would brief the MFA Consular Office on the process and regulations.

Comment

¶6. (C) Moleleki, as always, cut a colorful figure as is his wont -- in public and private. His role in the ruling LCD is a tenuous one given his 2005/2006 internal party conflicts with the Prime Minister. These resulted since the Foreign Minister is seen as a charismatic figure by many voters, is the editor of the party's newsletter and also handles the LCD Youth League; therefore, he has often been seen as a threat himself to the PM's position. What we found interesting in this discussion was his strong belief that the LCD could withstand additional floor crossing by members of Parliament because of what he called clear evidence of Thabane's "criminal activities." He repeated this allegation several times indicating that the LCD has

concrete evidence to this effect. In our conversation with other members of the diplomatic corps, it has been their take that an upset of the LCD is unlikely given that several of the small opposition party members are in fact "plants" of the LCD. These individuals are believed to be loyal supporters of the LCD despite their seats in Parliament under different political party labels. The FOMIN also intimated that the GOL might pursue legal action against Thabane. The comment about Libya's financing of former Minister Thabane has been a recurring theme from Moleleki for some time. The Libyan Envoy told Ambassador two (2) weeks ago that he planned to leave Lesotho and end his assignment here by January 2007. It had been previously observed that ongoing dissention between the Libyan Ambassador and the Minister of Foreign Affairs was no secret. The Taiwanese allegation, however, is something we have not heard generally discussed. We have observed that the PRC and Taiwan seem to cooperate in the textile industry in Lesotho. As the Parliament session continues until December, we will regularly pulse the sentiment of various party members, opinion makers and government officials. End Comment.

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